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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001365

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/22/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: RUMORS MOUNT OF PENDING GOVERNMENT ATTACK AGAINST NKUNDA

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Eastern regional military commanders were ordered to return unexpectedly early to their posts July 21, cutting short follow-on meetings scheduled for Kinshasa. Upon reaching Bukavu, General Mabe immediately called his field commanders in and, according to Monuc sources, briefed them on the government's battle plan before dispatching them to their duty stations. Similar briefings reportedly took place in Kindu and Kisangani, where government troops also are concentrated. Monuc confirms that large numbers of civilians are fleeing Minova as rumors circulate that Nkunda is rallying his forces for a preemptive attack. Monuc Bukavu believes that government troops could attack Nkunda's positions in Minova and Kalehe this weekend. End Summary.

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The Word Is Given?  
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12. (C) Developments over the last two days suggest that the long-postponed attack by government forces against rebel general Nkunda's positions could be coming soon, possibly even this weekend. Two days of briefings for all the eastern regional military commanders (except N. Kivu's General Obed, who declined to attend) in Kinshasa concluded July 20 with a meeting with President Kabila. The commanders were then scheduled to have two days of follow-on meetings in Kinshasa, but they were precipitously dispatched to their posts July 21. Monuc sources say that S. Kivu regional commander Mbuza Mabe immediately called his field commanders to Bukavu for a three-hour briefing on the battle plan before dispatching them to the field; we believe that commanders in Kindu and Kisangani did likewise. Some troops (no numbers available at this time) began moving out of Bukavu toward the north early July 22.

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Rumors Abound As Civilians Flee  
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13. (C) For several days there have been persistent rumors that Nkunda is mobilizing his forces (now reportedly numbering somewhere between 5,000-10,000) for a preemptive strike south, toward Bukavu. As of midday July 22, Monuc has seen no evidence of such movement, and Monuc sources in contact with forward FADRC elements stationed near Kalehe and Minova report that the FADRC is relaxed and reports no activity. Partly in response to fears of an imminent attack and partly to escape the apparently increasing depredations of Nkunda's troops, hundreds of civilians are confirmed by Monuc to be fleeing Minova, many across the lake in small fishing boats to Idjwe Island where they have family. At the same time, Monuc is in contact with several officers nominally under either Nkunda's or Obed's command, who say they will not obey orders from either general, but rather intend to take no action unless a genocide begins against Rwandaphones. Press reports continue that government troops are moving down from their stations in Beni (northern N. Kivu) and Kindu (in Maniema province), but we have no confirmation of such movement.

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Comment  
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14. (C) Trying to make sense out of the chaotic East is, as usual, dicing with circumstance. However, the unexpectedly rapid return of the commanders to the east and their briefing of the field elements does suggest that a decision to take the fight to the enemy may finally have been made. We do not believe, however, that Nkunda is preparing to launch any southern movement. Doing so would mean confronting directly the bulk of the government forces which lie between Nkunda's sites and Bukavu, and would seem to yield very little return for the cost, particularly since we find it hard to believe that he could have 10,000 troops at his disposal. Such a number would require virtually all the forces in the 8th military region (Obed's troops) and a significant number of Serufuli's militia as well. Monuc photographs of Kalehe show that Nkunda's people have gone to considerable trouble to fortify four different sites in that area, including reinforcing (possibly) with some sort of artillery. He seems much more likely, if pressed, to move laterally from Minova

to Kalehe and try to hold the ground there -- or, more threateningly, to fall back toward Goma, a move which would, in every sense of the word, take the fight to N. Kivu Governor Serufuli who so far has maintained at least a pretense (albeit dubious) of neutrality. We believe that if and when an attack begins, if the government forces have any sort of success at all in Minova (which is far from certain), Nkunda is most likely to break for Goma in an attempt to force Obed or Serufuli to assist him, or at least facilitate his escape in the general melee.

SCOTT